

Students as Collaborative Curators:
The Effect of World War I and its Aftermath
In Turkey and the United States
1914-1923

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Abstract

This learner-centered set of classroom activities centers around the experiences of World War I, both in the U.S. and in Turkey. Educators in both countries are calling attention to the need for greater teacher autonomy despite the increasingly controlling educational policies in both countries. In the summer of 2014 many nations will initiate commemorative events to mark the centennial of the world's first global conflict, World War I, or "The Great War." We offer this module for stimulating critical thought, awareness of global perspectives, and authentic citizenship education, both national and global.

Introduction to the *Exchanging Perspectives* Project

As the twenty-first century began, the ministries of education in both Turkey and in the United States reevaluated the role of social studies education in their respective nations. In America the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) emphasized reading and math skills at the expense of history and civic education. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced an effort to redress this imbalance in a May/June 2011 article in *Social Education*,

“President Obama and I reject the notion that the social studies is a peripheral offering that can be cut from schools ... The social studies play a critical role in creating civically competent young people who make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good and who contribute to an increasingly diverse, but interdependent world” (124-125).

On March 4, 2011 Isil Egrikavuk wrote in the *Hürriyet Daily News* that, “Turkish schoolbooks, once accepted as the complete truth about the country’s culture and history, have come under fire as the Education Ministry continues an ongoing curriculum revision.” Egrikavuk reports that Professor Kenan Çayır said, “For the first time [the ministry has] included a Turkish and World History Class in high school programs. It is mostly shaped by wars, but it is still a positive change.”

Educators in both countries recognize that there is a need to temper the implicit nationalist agenda of textbooks with an emphasis on learning about other world cultures. In *Teaching for the Common Good* Keith Barton and Linda Levstik write, “When we link ourselves to one community, we often cut ourselves off from others, sometimes with ruinous consequences” (46). Many teacher educators in both countries lament the erosion of teacher autonomy and ability to direct learning toward critical thought in their classrooms due to ever-increasing standardization, including the Turkish scholar, İbrahim Hakkı Öztürk, and American-born scholar Henry Giroux

(Öztürk, 2011; Giroux, 2006). This standardization is ostensibly for such liberal values as “global education,” and even more substantive goals such as “global competence,” but the curriculum and policy promote what Giroux calls “neoliberal pedagogy,” aimed at global competitiveness. We offer this module for stimulating critical thought, awareness of global perspectives, and authentic citizenship education, both national and global.

In the summer of 2014 many nations will initiate commemorative events to mark the centennial of the world’s first global conflict, World War I, or “The Great War”. Using twenty-first century technologies, today’s students can reflect on and share their own nation’s narrative of the Great War with students living in a different country. For both Turkey and the United States World War I was a turning point, but for very different reasons.

In the demise of the Ottoman Empire that marked the war’s end, Turks fought heroically to establish their nationhood in the face of overwhelming odds. With the founding of the modern Turkish state, a new constitution was ratified in 1921; historian Arthur Goldschmidt refers to this period in Turkish history as "The Phoenix Rising from the Ashes" (2010). Vast social and economic reforms were pursued. Many aspects of life in Turkey were profoundly changed—from modes of dress, to the place of religion in the public sphere, to the alphabet in which the Turkish language was written. Further, as historian Carter V. Findley emphasizes, the state also intervened in commerce, in accordance with the new statist governmental framework, establishing centralized control (Findley 1980, 2010). The reforms came at a time when daily life was also transformed, per force, due to war. The level of devastation that had resulted from World War I is hard to imagine. Of the 2.85 million men mobilized by the Ottomans, 800,000 were killed or died of disease. Civilian casualties in Anatolia equaled approximately 20% of the population (Findley, 2010).

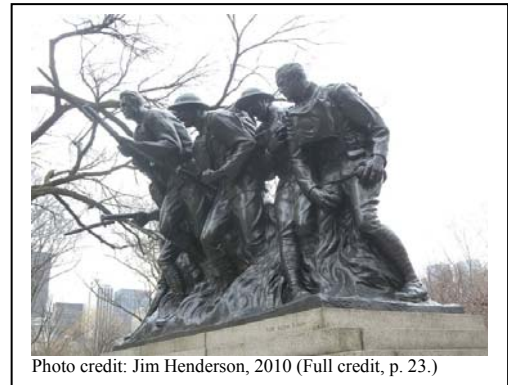
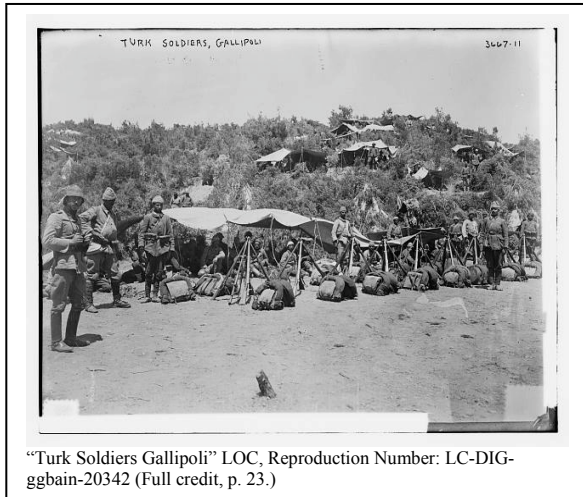
The United States entered the war in 1917 to support its allies Great Britain and France in their struggle against Germany, thus fighting on the side opposing the Ottoman Empire. The United States soldiers entered the theater of war late in the game, and their casualties were not nearly as immense: 117,465 military and civilian deaths, representing less than 1% of the population (Leland and Oboroceanu, 2010). However, U.S. efforts made a decisive difference to the outcome of the war as fresh American forces finally helped to break the stalemate on the Western Front. World War I thus marked the beginning of America's exercise of power on a global scale. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson was instrumental to the founding of the League of Nations, created soon after World War I in order to avoid future conflict on such a devastating scale. But the U.S. Congress refused to ratify America's membership. The non-interventionism of U.S. foreign policy between the two world wars (a direct consequence of World War I), may be little known or understood by students elsewhere. (Turkey joined the League of Nations in 1932.) In both countries the outcome of the war sparked significant changes in social mobility, gender roles, and industrialization.

While both Turkey and the United States participated in the key events that marked the beginning of the modern era, they learn little about one another's societies at the start of the twentieth century. An example of this omission in U.S. educational media can be found by glancing at the Timeline (1871-1939) on the Public Broadcasting Website that accompanies the PBS film *The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century*, at <http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/timeline/>. While the timeline follows events in Germany and in Russia after the war, no mention is made of what happened to the Ottoman Empire and the Turks in the war's aftermath. What, if anything, do Turks learn about America's role in the war, President Wilson's Fourteen Points, or the failure of the United States to sign the treaty that led

to the League of Nations? Certainly the story Americans tell themselves is different from the one Turkish students learn, but in what ways and for what reasons? In the accompanying lesson plan (see below), students become teachers of one another, as learners in each country research and mount on-line exhibits to share with one another about World War I and its aftermath.

Lesson Plan

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Goals

The purpose of Collaborative Curators: The Effect of World War I and its Aftermath is to help students view events from the perspective of more than one nation, thus providing greater historical accuracy and insight. In doing so it is hoped that some common stereotypes that Turks and Americans may have of each other, past and present, will be corrected.

What might some common stereotypes be? From the American side we surmise that Turkish students may believe that Americans have always had an interventionist and “bully” mentality, but in fact Americans entered World War I very reluctantly. At war’s end most Americans elected “isolationists” to Congress, those who did not want to engage in foreign conflicts, or even conflict resolution among nations. When American students learn about World War I the

focus is on the heartlands of Europe, and except for Gallipoli and a brief mention of the fall of the Ottomans, the “sick man of Europe” is often overlooked as a doomed enemy from the start. This lesson should be implemented once students in their home countries have a basic grasp of their own national history pertaining to World War I. Teachers can then ask their classes, “What would the story of World War I be like if we looked at it from the perspective of another country, one on the opposing side?” A variety of “getting to know you” long-distance learning activities can be implemented so that Turkish and American students begin to know one another before they undertake this project.

Overview of the Lesson

Students in each country first look at how World War I is memorialized in their own nation in order to create a Webpage for this project. Next they assess some of their own preconceptions (or lack of knowledge) about World War I as experienced by the opposing nation. In order to teach one another about World War I and its aftermath as it is taught in their home countries, students select and post photographs of World War I from the home country. Photographs are used in the initial phase because they speak to us through imagery rather than language, thus making it easier for cross-linguistic communication. Students in the other nation then set about analyzing these photographs as primary source documents, eventually providing captions for them with the help of students in their country of origin. Finally students compare their national textbook’s version of World War I and create a joint photographic exhibit, to be posted online, that includes photographs (and perspectives) from both countries.

Timeframe

This lesson is divided into four activities and a final concluding project. Teachers can implement all or just some of these activities. Most activities take approximately two class periods.

U.S. and Turkish Standards

United States Standards

USA National Standards for History: National Center for History in the Schools.

National Standards for United States and World History Grades 5-12

Era 7 The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

Standard 2C The student understands the impact at home and abroad of the United States involvement in World War I.

National Standards for World History Grades 5-12

Era 8 A Half-Century of Crisis and Achievement, 1900-1945

Standard 2A Analyze the relative importance of economic and political rivalries, ethnic and ideological conflicts, militarism and imperialism as underlying causes of the war.

Standard 2B Describe the major turning points of the war and the principal theaters of conflict...

Standard 3A Explain how the collapse of the German, Hapsburg, and Ottoman empires and the creation of new nation states affected international relations in Europe and the Middle East.

Common Core State Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Turkish Standards

Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Ministry of National Education]. (2012). *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti inkılap tarihi ve Atatürkçülük dersi 8. sınıf öğretim programı* [Republic of Turkey and Atatürk's

revolution history of curriculum: 8th grade]. Ankara: author. Retrieved from <http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/www/ogretim-programlari/icerik/7>

8th Grade – Unit2 – Standard 1: Students will evaluate the state of the Ottoman Empire in WW I in terms of occupation and sharing its territory by the Allies.

8th Grade – Unit2 – Standard 2: Students will evaluate the reaction of Ottoman administration, Mustafa Kemal and the people of the country to signing Mondros ceasefire treaty to World War I.

Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Ministry of National Education]. (2011). *Ortaöğretim 10. Sınıf tarih öğretim programı [Secondary Education 10 Grade history curriculum]*. Ankara: author. Retrieved from <http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/www/ogretim-programlari/icerik/72>

10th Grade – Unit5 – Standard 17: Students will understand the reasons and results of WWI.

Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Ministry of National Education]. (2012). *Ortaöğretim Türkiye Cumhuriyeti inkılap tarihi ve Atatürkçülük dersi öğretim programı [Secondary Education of the Republic of Turkey and Atatürk's revolution history of curriculum]*. Ankara: author. Retrieved from <http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/www/ogretim-programlari/icerik/72>

12th Grade - Unit 2 - Standard 2: Students will analyze and evaluate the state of Ottoman Empire during WWI.

12th Grade - Unit 2 - Standard 3: Students will understand the consequences of signing Mondros ceasefire treaty to World War I.

Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Ministry of National Education]. (2012). *Ortaöğretim çağdaş Türk ve dünya tarihi öğretim programı [Secondary modern Turkish and world history curriculum]*. Ankara: author. Retrieved from <http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/www/ogretim-programlari/icerik/72>

12th Grade (Elective– Unit1 – Standard 1: Students will explain the developments during and [in the] aftermath of WWI.

Activity 1: Creating a Class Webpage of World War I Memorials

Timeframe: 1 to 2 class periods

After studying World War I in their home classes, American teachers and Turkish teachers should ask their classes to think about how World War I is commemorated in their own country. Teachers can pose the following question: Apart from learning about the history of World War I in school textbooks, how else do citizens learn about their nation's past? As the students suggest ideas, the teacher should write a list on the board. These might include:

- A national holiday to mark the event.
- Cemeteries dedicated to those soldiers who fought in World War I.
- Memorial statues in towns or cities of famous leaders or brave regiments.
- National museums with displays about the war.
- Fictional or documentary films and TV programs.
- Stories from their parents and grandparents.
- Artifacts passed down in their family, or community.

Once students have come up with such a list, ask students working in pairs to find a photograph of places/events/media that commemorate the war. Images can be downloaded (and cited) from the Web, or better yet, encourage students to investigate their own community and take the photographs themselves. Once all pairs in both classes have found a photo, each class should create its own Webpage entitled, Remembering World War I in Turkey, or Remembering World War I in America. These Webpages can be posted to the Web using blogger

(www.blogger.com), wordpress (wordpress.org), or other. Turkish students should look at the American site and vice versa. What questions do students have looking at the other country's Webpage/blog? What is familiar, what is distinctive? Which country seems more invested in memorializing World War I, and why?

Activity 2 Seeing World War I from a Different Perspective

Timeframe: 2 class periods

Chart A

U.S. & World War I	True or False	Reasons You Think So
America made little impact on the outcome of World War I since it was essentially a European war.		
America has always been eager to exercise its military might abroad, even more so after World War I.		

Chart B

Turkey & World War I	True or False	Reasons You Think So
Because the Ottoman Empire was “the sick man of Europe” it was easily defeated in World War I.		
Since the Ottomans lost the war, Turks do not find anything to celebrate about it.		

Tell students that before they learn about World War I from another country’s perspective, they will assess what they *think* they know about World War I and its aftermath in both nations.

Distribute Chart A and Chart B to all students in both countries. After students fill them in, assign one student in each class to tally the “true or false” columns and to create one final chart that represents what the majority in each class thinks (with some of their reasons if possible).

This final chart should be posted to the Website used for this lesson.

Next, students in each country should compare their results. Do Americans have the same ideas about themselves that Turks have of them, or not? Do Turks have the same ideas about the meaning of World War I that Americans do? What might account for some of these discrepancies? Teachers can return to the chart results at the end of the lesson to see what new perspectives are represented, to see what they learned about the differences between Turkish and

American perspectives.

Activity 3: Teaching About World War I Through Photographs

Timeframe: 2 class periods

Teachers should explain that their class and its counterpart in the other country are going to teach each other about their home country's experience of World War I and its aftermath.

To do this each class is going to look for photographs that they think best represent their country's experience. (They can download these and/or make scans of photographs in books.)

Note that these photographs must represent primary sources created during the time period. In order to select the photographs, teachers should place their students in groups of five or six, with each group assigned to find and select one photograph that they think best conveys the meaning of World War I in their own country.

Assign groups as follows:

- Group 1, Photograph 1: The causes of the war
- Group 2, Photograph 2: Key leader(s) of the war effort.
- Group 3, Photograph 3: Battlefront experience that represents a turning point.
- Group 4, Photograph 4: Home front experience that represents how it has changed.
- Group 5, Photograph 5: Aftermath of the war.

Teachers can use this opportunity to help their students summarize and synthesize what they have learned about World War I in the home country as they decide what they want to convey about it to the other country.

All of the photographs should be posted to the Website used for this lesson plan, with citations and URLs. Thus there will be a set of five photos concerning America and a set of five about

Turkey. Each photograph should be given its corresponding number, but no caption or identifying information.

Now, working in their assigned groups, ask Group 1 to analyze Photograph 1 posted by the other country, Group 2 to analyze Photograph 2 posted by the other country, etc. using the Photo Analysis Worksheet of the U.S. National Archives.

http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf

At the conclusion of this activity Group 1 in America should submit their questions to Group 1 in Turkey, Group 1 in Turkey should submit their questions to Group 1 in the United States and so forth. Groups should answer each other's questions and post both questions and answers on the Website. (The answers should include why the home country students chose the photograph.) Students in the other country should now write and post a caption at least one paragraph long to accompany the photograph on the Website, providing the historical context needed in order to understand it.

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation

A.

Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

B.

Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

People	Objects	Activities

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Step 3. Questions

A.

What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

B.

Where could you find answers to them?

Designed and developed by the Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington,
DC 20408

Activity 4: Students teach each other about World War I and its aftermath

Timeframe: 2 to 3 class periods

A. Working in their assigned groups ask students to use their textbook in order to fill in the following two charts. Their answers will be posted to the group Website for their counterpart group to read.

World War I and its Aftermath in _____

Name of textbook, name of course, age of students:
Period of time the book covers.
Number of pages devoted to World I and its aftermath in history.
What term(s) are used for World War I? (e.g. The Great War)
Why did your country enter the war, on whose side? What were its goals?
When did it enter the war? What were the major battles in which your country fought either during the war or its aftermath? Give dates.
Who are the heroes and heroines of the war in your country? Name and describe at least three. What was their contribution to the war effort? How are they remembered in your country today?

What were the major hardships faced by soldiers? What were the major hardships faced by civilians?
Approximately how many casualties (deaths/injuries) did your country suffer?
What treaties did your country sign or not sign at the end of the war? What were its effects? How did people in the home countries react to it?
After the official end of World War I (1918) and up until 1923 did your country engage in fighting related to the war's outcome? If so why? What was the final outcome?
By the mid-1920s was your country more or less apt to become engaged in foreign diplomacy and/or commitments that could lead to war? Explain

Summarize the effects of World War I up until the mid-1920s in your country. How did the war change things in the following categories?

The Aftermath of World War I in _____

Economic	Social	Political	Foreign Affairs
Infrastructure, industries, housing, business.	Effect on different social classes, ethnic groups, women, work, education.	Leadership, form of government, national goals.	More or less engagement with other countries, policy changes,

			goals.

B. Once groups have received their counterpart's answers they should write and post answers to the following questions to the Website. Alternatively, both classes can hold a joint live discussion using a program such as Skype, to debate the following questions. (A Skyped session should be well-organized, with students assigned to speak on one of these topics for a specific, limited timeframe.)

- For which country was World War I more important? Debate and explain why.
- In which country do memorials (statues, holidays, etc.) of World War I take on more significance, and why?

- In what respects did Turkish and American societies witness similar changes after World War I? What changes were specific to Turkey?
- How did the world change at the end of World War I? Describe the roles played by both Turkey and America in effecting these changes.

Final Activities: Reflection, Assessment and The Collaborative Curator

Project

Timeframe: 2 or more class periods

Reflection and Assessment:

Ask both classes to review their initial responses to the activities in this lesson.

- Revisit the homepage created by each class with its photographs of war memorials (Activity 1). What new historical information and emotional feelings do students in the “other” country now bring to these images?
- Revisit the questionnaires in Activity 3. Would students fill them in with the same responses they did at first? Why or why not? Has their image of “the other” country changed? What new understandings have they gained?
- If students could re-write their own country’s textbook version of World War I, what would be most important to add and why? As a final assessment of this lesson, ask each student to write at least three additional paragraphs and show where in their textbook they would want them to appear.

Collaborative Curator Project:

- Using all the photographs that both classes generated, create a museum exhibit in each of the classrooms and invite parents or community members to visit it. Each of the five topics covered in the exhibit should have a posted written explanation and each photograph a caption. In addition, an opening and closing statement should reflect a through-story that integrates the images.
- Alternatively, create a Web-based photographic exhibit in which students from both countries perform the role of curators together. In this case re-shuffle the groups in Activity 3 such that each new group (Groups 1 through 5) consists of two members from Group A (a Turk and an American), two members from Group B and so forth. Thus Turks and Americans are working together to curate the story of World War I in both countries using the photographs, as per above.

About the Authors

Melinda McClimans, Assistant Director of the Middle East Studies Center at the Ohio State University since July 2003, has an M.A. in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and is working on a PhD in Global Education (ABD). She organizes the annual study tour to Turkey for teachers, has organized and taught the Center's institutes for teachers, and has co-taught online courses for teachers with Dr. Merry Merryfield. She directs the teacher training program and creates or edits teacher-created instructional materials.

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Page 7 Right: New York City World War I Memorial on Fifth Avenue at 67th Street, for the 7th Regiment (US 107th). Author Jim Henderson, 2010. Wikipedia Commons.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:107th_Rgt_Memorial_5th_Av_cloudy_jeh.jpg

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